



THE EAST BELL TAPHOUSE

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TEXAS
PVY-7366



THE
EAST BELL TAPHOUSE

ECONOMIC RESILIENCE



I ❤️
Rockdale

Introduction

Nestled at the crossroads of progress, Rockdale must balance the need to provide infrastructure, public services, and quality of life amenities while attracting new businesses. Rockdale is strategically located to the Samsung semiconductor plant in Taylor, the Sandow Lakes Ranch (SLR) development on the former ALCOA plant site, and the educational triangle outlined in the Regional Context section of the Community Snapshot chapter. The challenge many growing suburban cities face is balancing rapid residential development and population growth with the need to diversify the tax base and attract businesses whose employees' needs align with the skills of existing residents. While Rockdale has not experienced this type of rapid suburbanization in recent years, that growth is on the horizon and presents a significant opportunity to prepare, leverage, and benefit rather than react as many suburban communities have.

Because this is a Comprehensive Plan, the focus is on assisting Rockdale in making better-informed decisions related to economic development in a citywide context versus individual target industries or project-specific site decisions. The Rockdale Municipal Development District (Rockdale MDD) is the City entity charged with leading business retention and recruitment efforts. Over recent years, the Rockdale MDD and the City have invested in and been a part of numerous documents to support city growth, notably amidst the current surge in business expansion just beyond the city limits. Examples, briefly outlined in the Community Snapshot chapter and further in this chapter, include the Master Plan for Downtown Rockdale (2012), Rockdale Reborn (2022), City of Rockdale Communities as Startups (CASU) Report (2022), and Vision 22 East Cameron (2022). These reports, initiated the process of identifying key areas within the City and formulating strategies for their revitalization, ultimately attracting new businesses.



WHAT WE'VE HEARD:

Economic Resilience

SURVEY RESULTS

- The vast majority of participants rated the business climate in Rockdale currently Okay to Very Poor.
- Insufficient infrastructure, limited networking and support services, and lack of skilled workforce were rated the top three barriers or challenges to business growth in Rockdale.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Addressing the economic stressors in Rockdale could go a long way in allowing residents to focus on other things that can enhance their quality of life.
- Support and grow local businesses, especially in Downtown, marrying economic development with historic preservation. Rising commercial rents are a burden on existing small businesses
- Offer more entertainment and retail options, especially for high school aged kids.
- Broaden the range of available services for residents; focus on creating an environment that might attract healthcare providers.
- Grow and diversify Rockdale's economic base to fill some of the gaps left by the ALCOA departure.

"Beautification, create a better first impression."
- Community Member

"There aren't enough people in Rockdale to support new businesses."
- Community Member

"Too many businesses come and go because workers are hard to come by."
- Community Member

"Lack of a hospital."
- Community Member

"Limited citizens' capital."
- Community Member

"The surface appearance of the town as looking so industrial and in some places just neglected."
- Community Member

Existing Rockdale MDD Framework

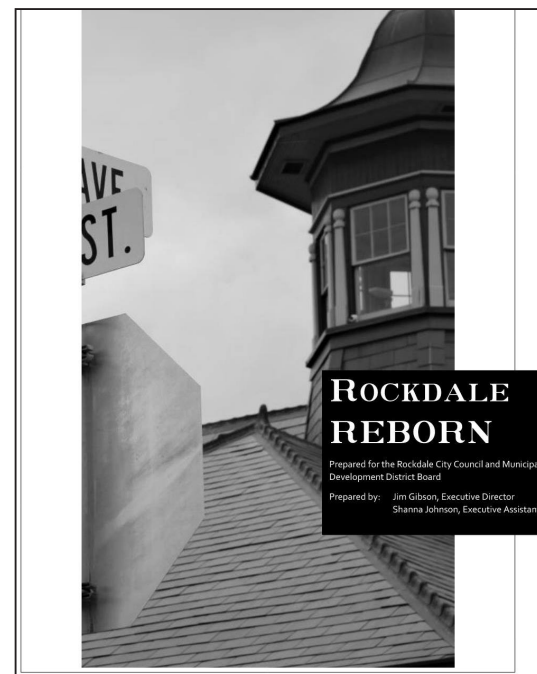
Vision 22 East Cameron

In late 2021, The Rockdale MDD and the City of Rockdale collaborated to envision the future of the East Cameron Avenue area. Named Vision 22, the study assessed current conditions impacting development and quality of life, proposing recommendations for both public and private actions to boost economic development and urban character. Positioned in the heart of the Texas Triangle, Rockdale is influenced by regional dynamics, notably the Austin area's rapid growth. Despite its location along U.S. 79, providing commercial exposure, the City faces setbacks due to the closure of major employers in the late 2000s. Challenges in the East Cameron neighborhood include a shortage of homes limiting population and employment growth, contributing to a negative perception.

The Vision comprises three building blocks: Transform the Avenue, Create Connected Parks, and Nurture Healthy Neighborhoods. Transforming the avenue by planning for a mix of quality residential and commercial development, creating connected parks with Bridge Park as a community focus, and nurturing healthy neighborhoods through improved appearances, better streets, and safe routes. Implementation strategies involved funding public improvements, enforcing stronger regulations for quality development, and using economic tools to entice private sector involvement.

Rockdale Reborn

The Rockdale City Council and Rockdale MDD expressed a shared interest in leveraging tourism to stimulate the local economy. Recognizing tourism as an important element, although insufficient on its own, Rockdale Reborn outlines features for Rockdale to compete in the regional market. Proposed initiatives include increased City Council involvement and resource allocation for downtown development, the establishment of an arts/downtown tourism program managed by existing City and Rockdale MDD staff, and the initiation of a sports tourism program. Projections for funding and potential contributors are provided, serving as an informed starting point for discussions by City Council and the Rockdale MDD Board.



2023 Retail Market Snapshot

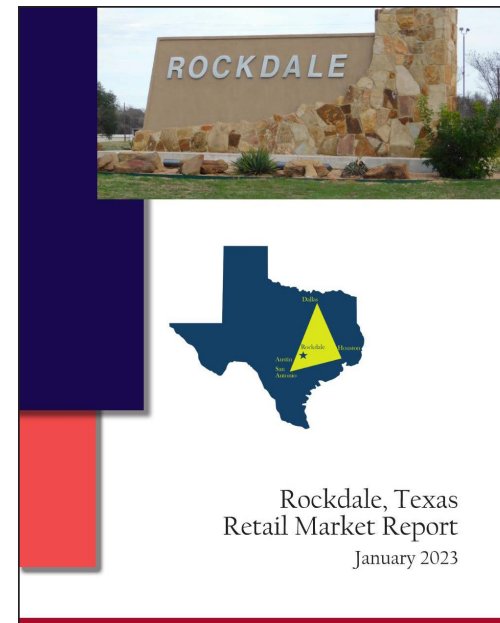
The Rockdale Retail Market Report outlines essential information for potential retail projects in Rockdale. With an increase in regional housing development activity driven by business growth from the Austin market and major employer announcements, such as the new Samsung plant in Taylor, Rockdale anticipates significant industrial growth. Identified retail gaps outlined in this snapshot include grocery stores, building materials, automobile dealers, and department stores. Opportunities exist for national and regional restaurant establishments not currently present in Rockdale but prospering in comparable markets. Situated on U.S. 79, connecting to Round Rock and the larger Austin market, Rockdale benefits from diverse traffic and exposure, with counts exceeding 15,000.

Housing Development Fact Sheet

The Rockdale Housing Development Fact Sheet introduces the community's favorable conditions for housing projects. With a strong demand for various housing units and recent job-creating business announcements, Rockdale presents an opportune environment for developers. The Austin region's combination of business growth and affordability challenges enhances the appeal of quality, affordable communities within a commutable distance.

Target Industry Analysis Report

Economic development organizations frequently conduct target industry analyses to streamline, focus, and enhance success probabilities. By narrowing down to a select number of compatible industries, resources can be effectively deployed. The selection is often based on local assets, workforce specialization, and larger industry trends. In March 2023, the Rockdale MDD conducted such an analysis, identifying different industry options across seven broad industries. The goal is to refine marketing efforts, respond more effectively to prospect leads, and pinpoint industries with significant growth potential. The selection process involved a mix of qualitative and quantitative data. The resulting report details the identified target industries, their broad definitions, key location factors, how Rockdale's assets align with these factors, and a brief discussion on optimizing these assets.



Economic Analysis

Rockdale's strategic economic development efforts in recent years have created resources for future developers. In anticipation of significant population growth, there is a pressing need for additional resources to continue fostering the City's expansion and success. While the Future Land Use Map (FLUM) identifies optimal sites for prospective growth, it is imperative for Rockdale to explore supplementary public policy initiatives. These initiatives will play an important role in strategically positioning key areas and corridors for economic development projects, complementing and extending beyond the scope of the Rockdale MDD initiatives. This forward-thinking approach allows the City to remain at the forefront of sustainable and diversified growth, creating an environment conducive to both prosperity and innovation benefiting existing residents as well as future residents. Some main obstacles facilitating growth include:

- Departure of ALCOA
- Shortage of restaurant, retail, and entertainment options for residents
- Lack of a strong identity or brand
- Poor infrastructure conditions and quality
- Limited attainable housing options

While these challenges are not unique to Rockdale, continued proactive efforts are necessary to achieve the desired growth results in the City.

Topic of Note: Departure of ALCOA

Rockdale has encountered significant economic challenges in recent years, notably following the departure of the ALCOA plant in 2008. The community's heavy reliance on this single industry created a vulnerability, exposing it to the cascading effects of job losses, unemployment, and a decline in local revenue. The departure of ALCOA not only resulted in a substantial reduction in direct and indirect employment but also posed the risk of a skill mismatch among the workforce. In fact, the last four obstacles to facilitating growth, above, are the result of Rockdale's dependence on a single industry (and employer). This economic shock underscores the need for a diversified approach to mitigate such vulnerabilities and build resilience in the face of industry fluctuations. The community must now navigate the complexities of economic recovery by implementing strategies that encourage diversification, workforce training, and the creation of an environment conducive to entrepreneurship, thereby fostering long-term adaptability and sustainability.



Local Economic Context

Leveraging insights from the 2023 Retail Market Report enhances our understanding of the local economic landscape by analyzing aspects such as local retailers and employment figures. The 2023 Retail Market Report considered a 15-minute drive radius of the City rather than relying solely on city data. This comprehensive analysis offers a more nuanced understanding of the entire local market.

Community Retail Gap/Surplus

Retail gaps highlight areas where consumer demand surpasses the current supply, providing potential opportunities for businesses to address unmet needs. In Figure 40, identified retail gaps in the community include building material stores, limited service eating, and automotive dealers, suggesting potential avenues for strategic business expansion. This gap may be exacerbated by the leakage of demand to nearby markets or commuting patterns, indicating that Rockdale’s market alone may not be sufficient for a particular type of business to thrive.

Conversely, retail surpluses indicate an excess of businesses relative to demand, fostering heightened competition and challenges. This is evident in sporting goods stores, automotive parts stores, health and personal care stores, as well as hobby, book, and music stores, as detailed in the 2023 Retail Market Snapshot. It is worth noting that Rockdale may be drawing customers beyond the typical 15-minute drive market for certain services, creating a surplus that might not be sustainable in smaller nearby communities.

A key observation lies not in the over-saturation of grocery stores, as seen in Figure 40, but rather in the community’s specific preference for a particular grocer and the desire to introduce healthy competition to existing retailers. This recurrent theme in community input underscores the importance of aligning retail strategies with the specific needs and preferences of the local residents.

Employment

In the 2023 Retail Market Snapshot, a significant disparity became evident when comparing employment figures to the daytime population of 9,932 in 2022 (Figure 41). With fewer job opportunities in Rockdale compared to its resident population, a large number of individuals commute elsewhere daily for work. The daytime population (Figure 42), representing individuals present during business hours, is notably lower than the resident population, indicating a need for improvement in the local job market. Addressing this gap is important to retaining residents and preventing migration for employment opportunities, and enhancing the potential benefits local job prospects for economic vitality and community sustainability. In addition, achieving increased daytime population is critical to addressing some of the gaps identified.

Figure 40. Major Retail Gap/Surplus Areas
(largest gap/surplus listed first)

Major Retail Gap Areas	Major Retail Surplus Areas
Building Materials Stores	General Merchandise Stores
Limited Service Eating (such as fast casual dining)	Sporting Goods Stores
Automotive Dealers	Grocery Stores
Full Service Restaurants	Automotive Parts Stores
Department Stores	Health & Personal Care Stores
Other Motor Vehicles	
Electronic & Appliance	
Clothing Stores	

Source: 2023 Retail Market Snapshot, via Placer.ai STI: Market Outlook Trade Area Demographics

Figure 41. Daytime Population

Daytime Population	Population	Percentage
2020 Rockdale Population	5,323	-
Students	2,989	30.1%
Workplace Employees	2,587	26.0%
Retired/Disabled	1,801	18.1%
Pre-K to 8th Grade	1,745	17.6%
Homemakers	1,600	16.1%
9th to 12th Grade	839	8.4%
Children at Home	533	5.4%
Post Secondary	405	4.1%
Unemployed	272	2.7%
Work at Home	150	1.5%
Total	9,932	

Source: 2023 Retail Market Snapshot

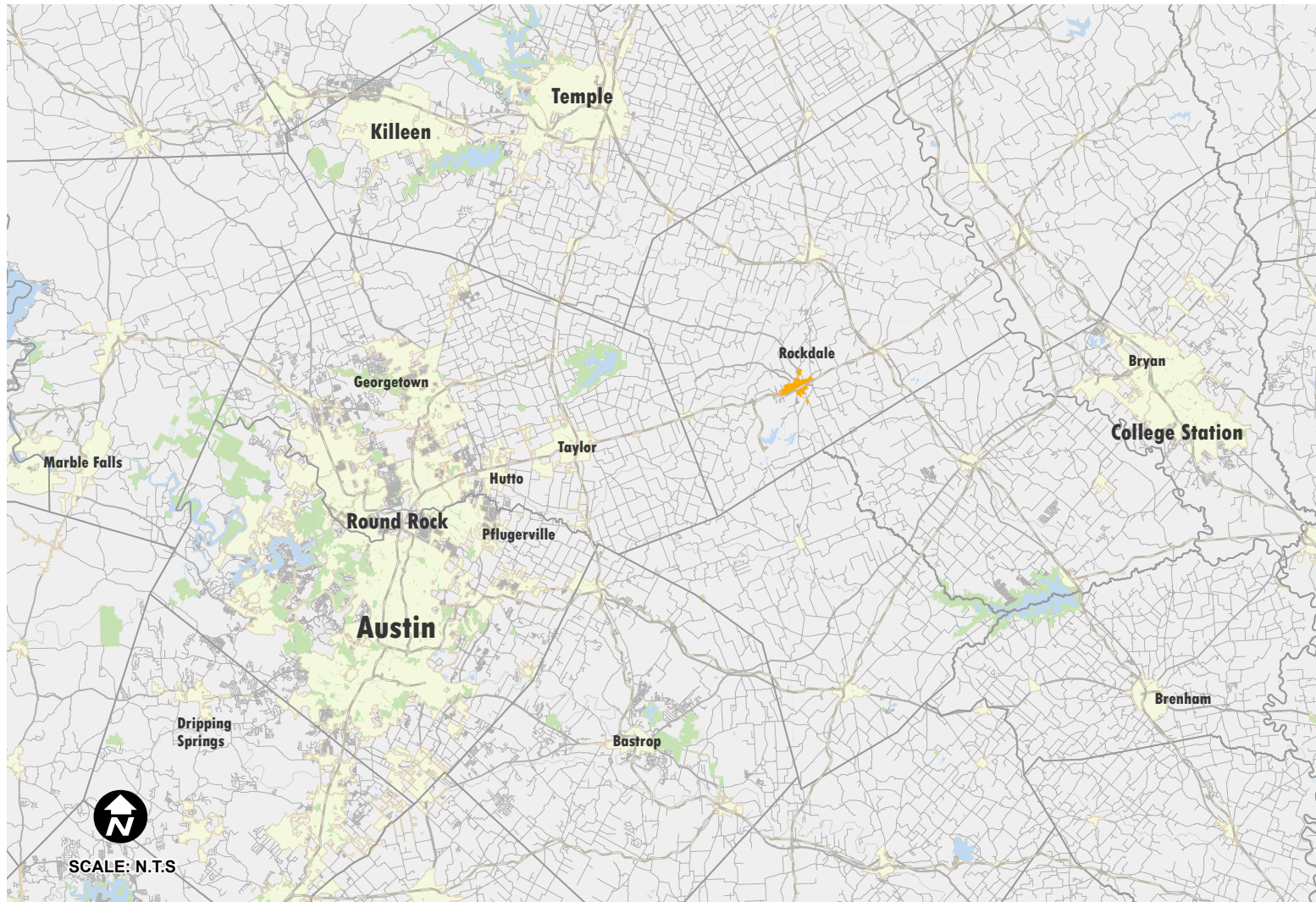
Figure 42. Employment by Occupation

Employment by Occupation (16+ Years Old)	Population	Percentage
Construction	1,085	24.6%
Professional Specialty	686	15.5%
Production & Transportation	610	13.8%
Office Administration	570	12.9%
Sales	378	8.6%
Managerial/Executive	322	7.3%
Building Maintenance	297	6.7%
Food Prep/Serving	182	4.1%
Healthcare Support	92	2.1%
Personal Care	91	2.1%
Protective	61	1.4%
Farming, Fishing, & Forestry	44	1.0%
Total Employees	4,418	

Source: 2023 Retail Market Snapshot

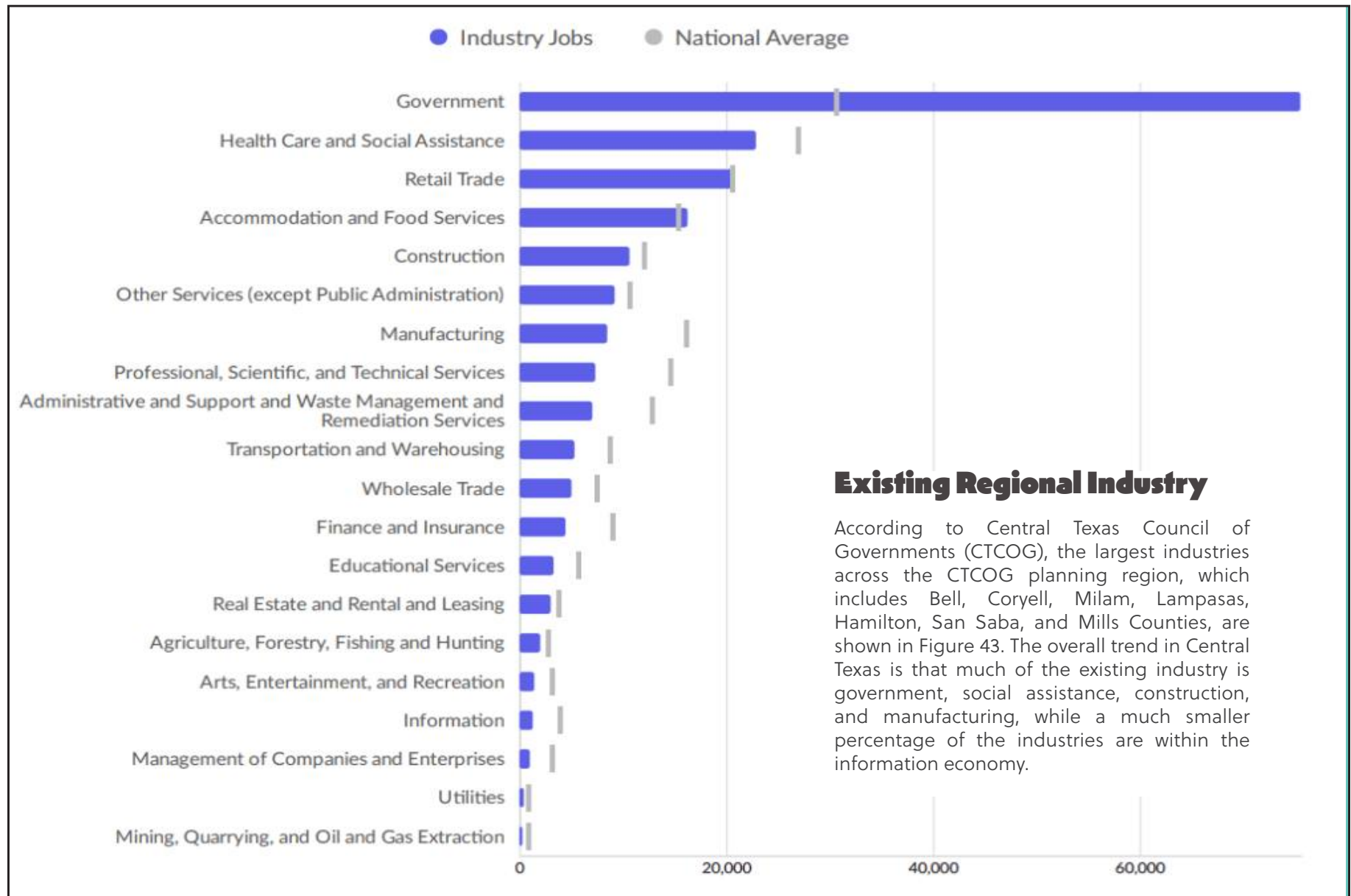
Regional Growth Context

Discussing regional growth is vital as it provides a comprehensive understanding of the interconnected dynamics that shape the economic and social fabric of an area. Regional growth discussions are essential for urban and economic planning, as they shed light on the strengths and challenges of specific industries, employment trends, and infrastructure needs. By engaging in conversations about regional growth, stakeholders can collaboratively identify opportunities for economic development, address potential disparities, and align policies to support sustainable and inclusive growth.



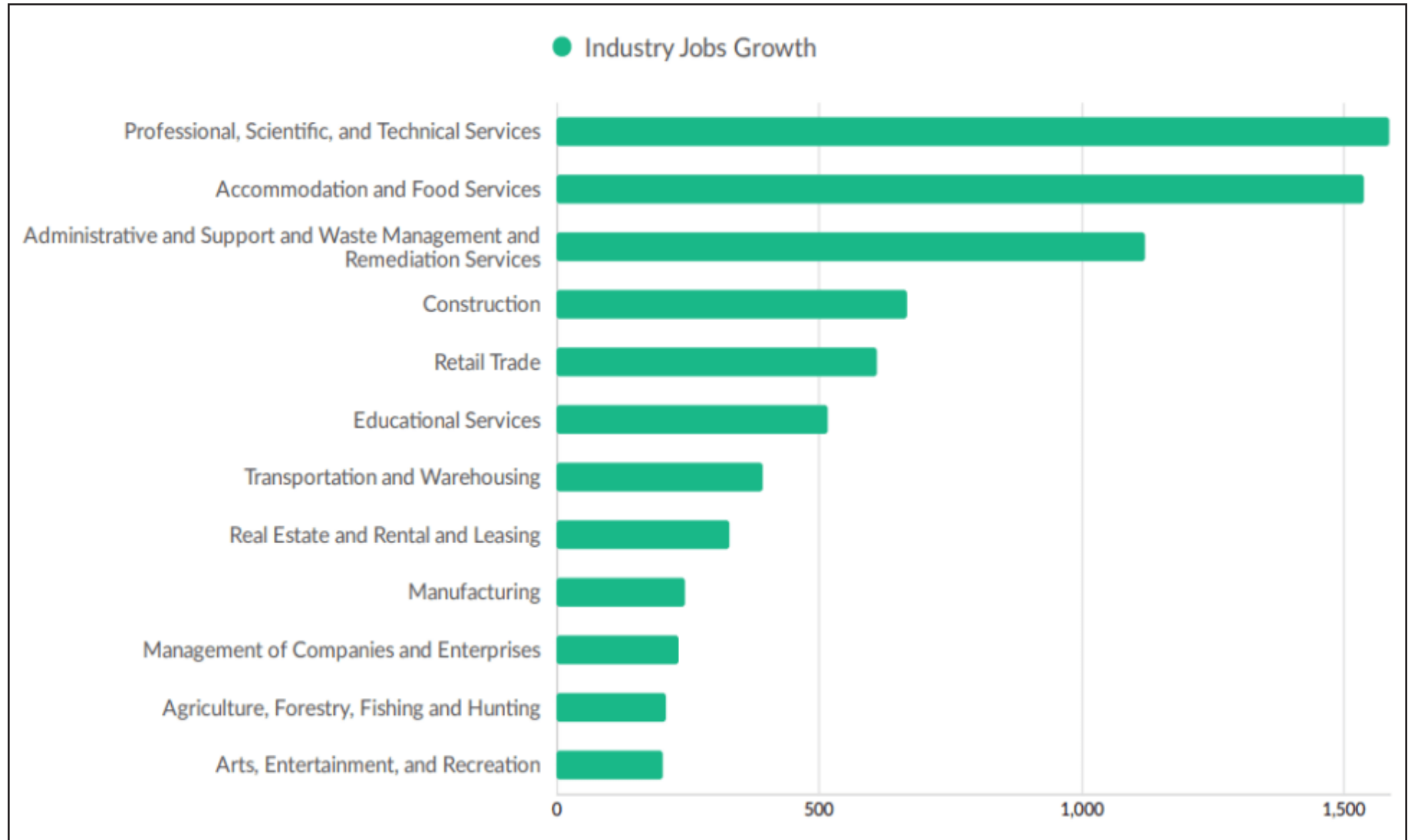
Map 16. Regional Market Context

Figure 43. Existing Regional Industrial Base



Source: CTCOG

Figure 44. Regional Industry Jobs Growth



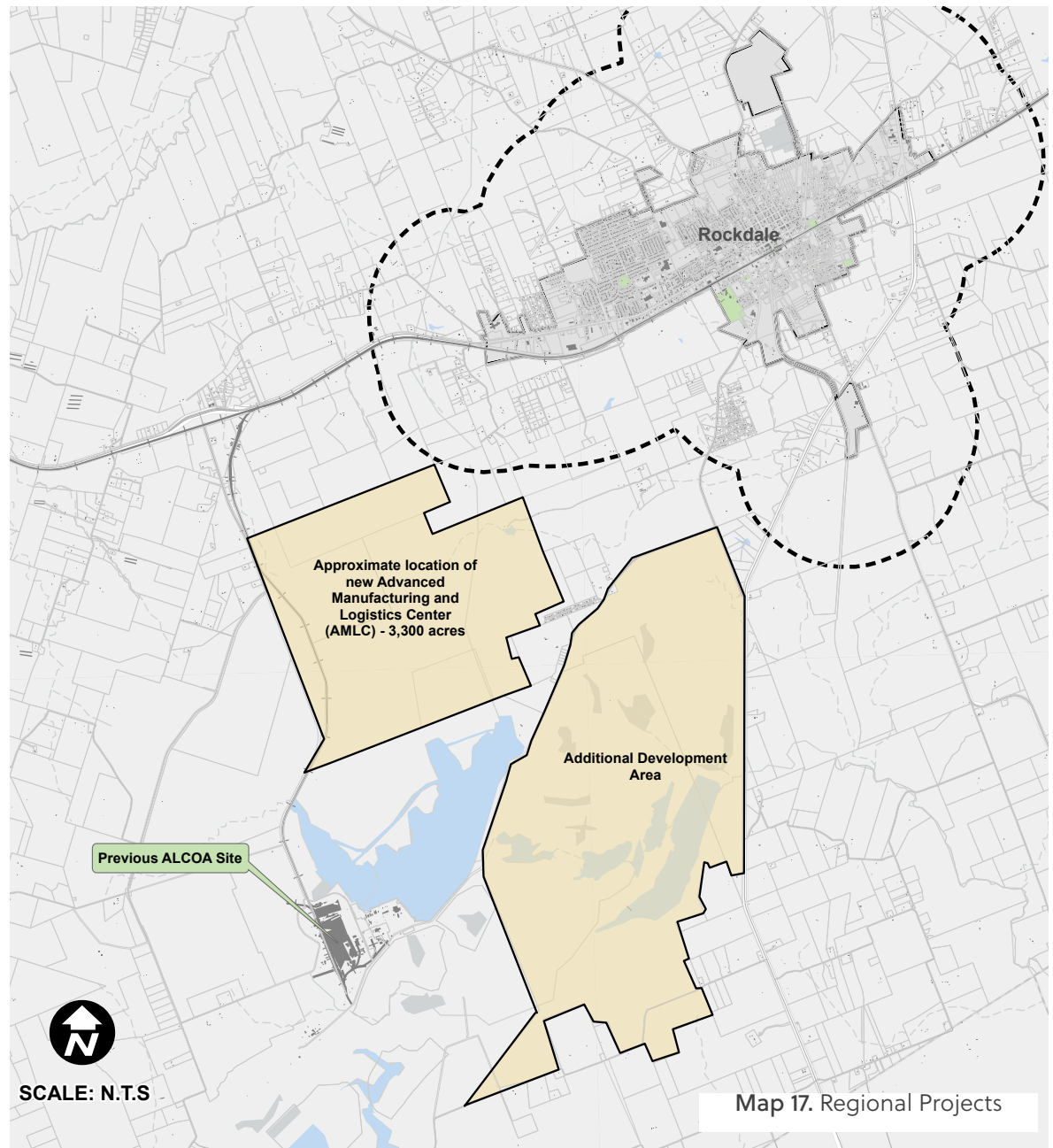
Source: CTCOG

Future Regional Industry

The industries that are driving new growth within the Central Texas Region are primarily those that represent the information economy, such as science and technology. This trend has manifested locally with significant growth in the semiconductor industry, which plays a significant supporting role in many emerging markets such as large-scale data centers, automotive, sensing technologies, and consumer electronics. Manufacturing will still play a large role in the region's economy as many of the inputs required for these industries will likely be sourced in areas with lower land values neighboring Travis and Williamson County.

The Sandow Lakes Ranch (SLR) development located southwest of Rockdale is one of the first indications that this trend is quickly coming to fruition. This major project will bring commercial, residential and industrial uses to the region. However, the initial phases currently under development will be primarily industrial, which means those people will be seeking housing, shopping and services elsewhere until the long-term build out of the project is complete. Rockdale should see this as an opportunity to capitalize on that need and solidify themselves as a cultural and activity center for the region.

The need for a hospital in Rockdale is evident, especially considering the rapid growth occurring in the Central Texas region. With new industries driving growth, the influx of workers and aging existing residents necessitates essential amenities like healthcare facilities. To attract a hospital, Rockdale can strategically leverage its positioning as a cultural and activity center for the region. Urban planning initiatives could focus on zoning regulations conducive to healthcare infrastructure, incentivizing developers to invest in medical facilities. Economic development strategies may involve collaboration with healthcare providers and investors to explore public-private partnerships or tax incentives for hospital construction. By proactively addressing the growing demand for healthcare services, Rockdale can enhance its appeal as a vibrant community within the Central Texas economy.



Map 17. Regional Projects

The Knowledge Economy

As shown in Figure 44, above, the professional, scientific and technical services industry is the fastest growing job category within the region. This allows for opportunities in both upskilling the workforce in Rockdale as well as attracting creative class workers to support the local economy.

Knowledge Workers

Knowledge workers are a subsector of people whose primary skills are their critical thinking, problem solving, and innovation. Jobs may include medical professionals, designers, engineers, accountants, lawyers, scientists and researchers.

With recent lenience in many companies' work from home policies, Rockdale could be a major competitor for pulling these workers away from the surrounding cities. Rockdale offers a lifestyle and price point sought by many, while still being close to major metros and college towns to offer variety. These workers can choose to live almost anywhere and are seeking authenticity, unique culture and character. Revitalization of Rockdale's historic downtown and established neighborhoods provides these elements in a way that cannot be replicated by new developments.

Upskilling

Not everyone can be a knowledge worker; however, a broader knowledge economy can provide opportunities for all workers. A knowledge economy is based on the production of goods and services that stems from the

outputs of the knowledge workers. However, even manufacturing jobs in a knowledge economy are becoming more technical.

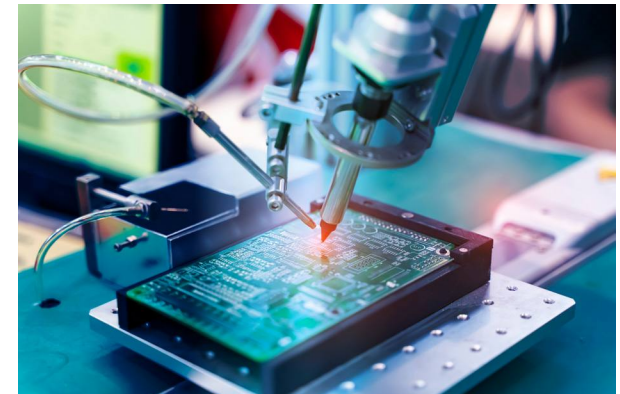
Helping existing residents transition with these industry changes will be important. Creating programs and incentives for local residents to upskill their technical abilities and be better prepared for finding a place in the knowledge economy could be highly valuable. With Rockdale's location nearby so many major educational institutions, these types of programs could be relatively achievable.

Additional Considerations

The knowledge economy not only needs workers but also physical locations to do business. The Future Land Use Plan provides locations for office, R&D and light or flex industrial spaces in Rockdale that could house knowledge economy type uses.

Reliable high-speed internet access for all residents will also be necessary to successfully facilitate a knowledge economy.

Seeking to build a knowledge economy in Rockdale could be a way to bring the investment and amenities the community is asking for. However, in the process, the focus must remain on promoting Rockdale's unique values, as expressed in the vision statement and goals from the first chapter of this Plan.



High Tech Manufacturing



Upskilling Institution



Flex Industrial / R&D Building

Economic “Gardening” and Resiliency

Economic gardening is an entrepreneurial and economic development strategy that focuses on nurturing and supporting the growth of local businesses, particularly small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), to stimulate economic vitality within a community or region. This concept emerged as a response to the limitations of traditional economic development approaches that often rely heavily on recruiting large corporations or industries from outside the area. Economic gardening seeks to cultivate a robust and sustainable local economy by fostering the development of existing businesses through three main pillars: providing access to information, facilitating networking opportunities, and offering customized support services. Central to economic gardening is the idea of leveraging local resources and expertise to create an environment where homegrown enterprises can flourish. By emphasizing the expansion of local businesses, economic gardening aims to generate job growth, enhance innovation, and contribute to long-term economic resilience. This approach recognizes the value of cultivating a diverse and dynamic business ecosystem that can adapt to changing economic landscapes, ultimately leading to more resilient and prosperous communities. Beyond the economic benefits, economic gardening also carries a soft advantage of encouraging community pride in the success of neighbors. Those resulting businesses often become ambassadors for Rockdale, actively supporting local organizations. Moreover, businesses developed through economic gardening are less likely to relocate to another community due to deep-rooted ties, contributing to the community’s stability and resilience.



Implementing an Economic Gardening Strategy

Implementing an economic gardening strategy is crucial for fostering local economic development, but it comes with some challenges that can be overcome. Convincing governing bodies to endorse and invest in this strategy requires time and effort, as it involves a shift from conventional approaches. Identifying and leveraging community assets, a crucial step in economic gardening, demands a comprehensive understanding of local resources, skills, and partnerships. Establishing a collaborative effort among resource partners and creating a system-wide operating agreement necessitate effective coordination and commitment from various entities. Moreover, determining the target audience for services involves careful consideration to ensure that the economic gardening program addresses the specific needs of local businesses poised for growth. Developing a delivery system for services requires finding or cultivating qualified business coaches and technical assistance resources, often challenging in smaller or rural areas. Finally, building a communication system to gain community support is an ongoing process that requires effective public outreach and engagement. Despite these challenges, the importance of economic gardening lies in its potential to generate sustainable economic growth, create local jobs, and build a resilient community. Successfully navigating these challenges involves strategic planning, stakeholder collaboration, and a commitment to nurturing the organic growth of businesses within the region.

Figure 45. Rockdale Community Assets

- Rockdale MDD
- Rockdale Chamber of Commerce
- Rockdale Independent School District
- Temple College
- Rockdale Rotary Club
- Existing Small Business Community



Economic Gardening Strategy Components

1. Secure Support from Local Officials and Stakeholders:

- Engage in proactive dialogue with elected officials and key stakeholders to address concerns and garner support for the economic gardening approach.
- Ensure inclusive decision-making processes by actively involving all relevant parties, avoiding inadvertent exclusion that may lead to future opposition.

2. Identify and Leverage Community Assets:

- Conduct a comprehensive inventory of community and business assets, encompassing human capital, skills, organizational partnerships, and existing support systems.
- Explore cultural and recreational amenities, as well as potential collaborations with external entities, to build a robust foundation for economic gardening.

3. Establish a Collaborative Effort Among Resource Partners:

- Form a steering committee comprising key resource partners to guide and implement the economic gardening project collectively.
- Foster common agreement on project goals and directions, ensuring each partner's commitment and responsibility in the implementation process.

4. Develop a System-Wide Operating Agreement:

- Create a formal or informal operating agreement that addresses critical operational and long-term planning issues, including decision-making, funding mechanisms, service delivery coordination, and program evaluation.
- Define the roles and contributions of each partner, establish accountability measures, and set the groundwork for sustained program success.

5. Determine the Target Audience for Services:

- Assess the entrepreneurial talent in the community, categorizing business into start-ups, lifestyle businesses, and growth-oriented companies.
- Prioritize growth-oriented ventures for maximum economic impact, focusing on companies with one to five years of establishment that demonstrate potential for scalability and market expansion.

6. Create a Delivery System for Targeted Services:

- Develop a comprehensive delivery system by identifying or cultivating qualified business coaches, linking to technical assistance resources, and offering market research services.
- Establish partnerships with other service providers, leveraging local and external resources to support growth-oriented businesses and ensure the success of the economic gardening program.

7. Develop a Communication System for Community Support:

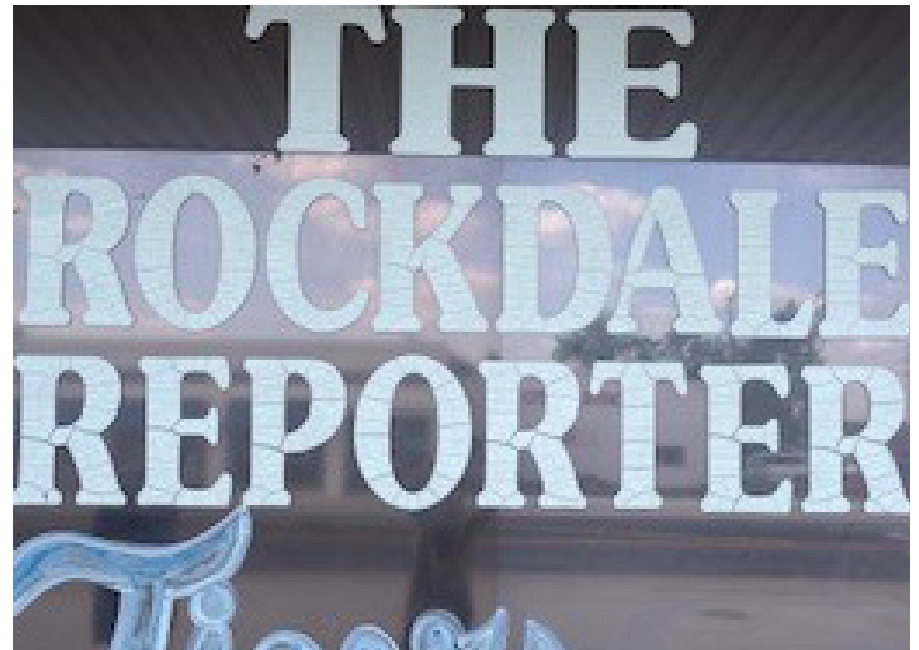
- Conduct public presentations to explain the economic gardening program and its benefits, securing support from local media outlets to amplify outreach.
- Utilize entrepreneurs and the referral network as advocates, delivering the program's message to funders, prospective clients, and the wider community.
- Build a regular reporting function into ongoing activities to maintain transparency and foster sustained community support.

Sustainable Businesses Retention and Attraction

According to the Center for American Progress's 2018 report entitled *The Realities of Economic Development Subsidies*, "incentives are often not crucial to where firms decide to locate, as state and local taxes represent less than 2% of business costs". A more significant portion of a company's costs are related to human resources as "Labor costs can account for as much as 70% of total business costs; this includes employee wages, benefits, payroll, and other related taxes", according to Paycor, a human resource software firm.

These findings suggest that an economic development attraction strategy crafted around improving quality of life factors, workforce education, and local business improvement may be more effective at attracting firms that align with the community's vision and goals that were identified throughout this planning process. Often, local business incentives are "front-loaded," which means that the City must provide its financial backing far ahead of when it will receive any potential benefits from a new company. This can cause significant financial strain on many factors that contribute to the quality of life within a City, such as education, infrastructure maintenance, or other improvement projects.

Ultimately, aggressive, front-loaded incentive strategies may jeopardize the long-term benefits that a City seeks to gain from incentive programs as new workers may choose to live in nearby towns that can offer a higher quality of life. "Back-loaded" economic incentives represent a less significant upfront cost to cities, such as performance-based grants, conditional development fee reductions, workforce training partnerships, shared-use agreements, and, in some cases, support for infrastructure. However, infrastructure improvements and enhancements should be considered carefully within the framework of a utility extension policy that reflects the goals and vision of the community. Back-loaded incentives such as workforce training, infrastructure improvement, and shared-use agreements all have the distinct advantage that they still can provide lasting benefits to the community regardless if the business succeeds or fails.



Incentive & Financial Programs

New Market Tax Credits

The New Market Tax Credit (NMTC) program is a U.S. federal initiative aimed at encouraging private investment in economically distressed communities. Established by the Community Renewal Tax Relief Act of 2000, the program is designed to stimulate economic and community development by providing tax incentives to investors who support projects in low-income areas.

EB-5

The EB-5 program, officially known as the Employment-Based Fifth Preference Immigrant Investor Program, is a United States immigration program that provides a path for foreign nationals to obtain U.S. green cards by making a qualifying investment in a new commercial enterprise that creates jobs. The program is administered by the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS).

EDA Grants

The Economic Development Administration (EDA) grants in Texas aim to support economic development initiatives and projects that enhance regional economic competitiveness, foster job creation, and promote innovation. EDA grants are typically provided to local and regional organizations, including governments, nonprofits, and educational institutions, to help stimulate economic growth and resilience.

SBA Loan Guarantee

The Small Business Administration (SBA) loan guarantee programs aim to facilitate access to financing for small businesses that may face challenges in obtaining traditional loans. The SBA doesn't directly lend money to businesses but provides a guarantee to approved lenders, reducing the risk for these lenders and making it easier for small businesses to secure loans.

Rockdale Joint Incentive Policy

This municipal program creates a framework in which the City of Rockdale can promote economic development and stimulate business and commercial activity within the City. Incentives include, but are not limited to, ad valorem taxes, sales tax grants, and fee reductions.

Community Development Corporations

Community Development Corporations (CDCs) play a significant role in financing and supporting community development initiatives in Texas, as well as throughout the United States. CDC financing in Texas involves various programs and initiatives aimed at revitalizing neighborhoods, creating affordable housing, promoting economic development, and addressing community needs.

Texas Small Business Credit Initiative (TSBCI)

TSBCI aims to support state programs that provide resources for small business growth and job creation. In a municipal context, this initiative can be utilized to assist local small businesses, especially those impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, contributing to the economic resilience of the community.

Skill Development Fund

Municipalities can collaborate with public community and technical colleges through this program to provide customized job training for local businesses. This ensures that the local workforce is equipped with the skills needed by businesses operating within the City, promoting employment and economic growth.

Opportunity Zones

The Opportunity Zone Program, is a federal effort to boost economic development and jobs in struggling U.S. communities. It gives investors a tax break when they invest in certain areas, known as Opportunity Zones. In Texas, 628 areas in 145 counties are Opportunity Zones out of a total of 5,265 areas. To pick these zones, the U.S. Dept. of Treasury looked at factors like high unemployment, low population, and economic challenges, such as natural disasters. Rockdale is included within the opportunity zone geographies.

US Department of Agriculture (USDA) Grants

The USDA Rural Development (USDA-RD) programs, USDA-RD Business Programs and USDA-RD Community Facilities Programs, provide loans and grants to upgrade the infrastructure in rural communities, aiming to bring new jobs, clean water and fuel, and reliable electricity to people.

Financing and Development Strategies

Incorporate Zoning Flexibility for Small Business

Incorporate provisions for modest commercial areas, like incubators, into the City's land use plan to cater to the needs of small local businesses. A small business incubator is a facility designed to offer affordable space and shared business support services to nascent businesses, aiming to boost the entrepreneurial environment and job creation in the community.

Make Space for Small Business

Cities can require development projects to reserve a portion of their first floorspace for small storefronts and for locally owned businesses. This would be an ideal scenario for future buildings developed or redeveloped in the City's mixed-use place types. It is also a worthwhile exercise to regularly review the unified development code and other applicable City ordinances to make sure that there are not unnecessary or complex rules that are hindering small business or preventing small spaces or vendors from operating.

Restructure Rockdale's Economic Incentives

Economic development incentive programs disproportionately favor big companies. Revisit the MDD's strategic plan to incorporate initiatives to help grow local businesses in Rockdale.

Expand Access to Capital

To expand local financing for small businesses, the City can implement initiatives such as establishing city-sponsored loan programs with favorable terms, collaborating with local financial institutions to create specialized small business financing products, and allocating funds for seed financing programs targeted at startups. The City can also support microfinance initiatives, provide financial education and counseling services, and incentivize private investment through tax credits. Creating a municipal investment fund, streamlining permitting processes for financial institutions, and fostering public-private partnerships are additional strategies that can contribute to the expansion of local financing for small businesses.